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REPORT

OF THE

COUNCIL OF THE BOARD OF TRADE
OF OTTAWA

ON THE

Settlement of the North-West.

SUBMITTED TO THE GENERAL MEETING OF THE BOARD ON MONDAY,
5TH APRIL, 1860, AND ORDERED TO BE PUBLISHED.

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OTTAWA:

PRINTED BY HUNTER, ROSE & COMPANY.

1860



Ottawa, Board of Trade

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SETTLEMENT OF THE NORTH-WEST.

THE subject of immigration having occupied the attention of the Board of Trade, and being cursorily dealt with in their report for 1868, the Council for the present year are desirous of taking the earliest possible opportunity for a more detailed examination of this question, and placing the results before the first General Meeting.

In order to effect this more thoroughly, the Council have investigated the following items: First—the most direct and practicable road to the Red River territory. Secondly—the area within the basin of the Lake Winnipeg—its capabilities for agricultural and commercial pursuits. Thirdly—the approximate cost of opening that territory—the description of works necessary. Fourthly—the opening of the country to the Pacific, with the area of the whole of the North-West territory. Fifthly—the value of developing its resources to British North America. And lastly, its necessity for consolidating the Empire, and employing the surplus labour and capital of Great Britain profitably.

Taking Montreal, 2,733 miles from Liverpool, as the starting point, the distance to Fort William on Lake Superior, the *Port of the Red River on the Lakes*, *via* Grand Trunk Railway to Sarnia, 510 miles; thence by water to Sault Ste. Marie, at foot of Lake Superior, 305 miles; thence to Fort William, 380 miles; total distance, 1,195 miles, of which 780 is by water, and therefore only available in summer. An uninterrupted line of navigation, extending from Montreal to Fort William, by way of the St. Lawrence River, and the Lakes, would be as follows: Montreal to Lake Ontario, 180 miles; Lake Ontario to mouth of Welland Canal, 180 miles. Welland Canal 28 miles. Lake Erie 250 miles. Detroit River 24 miles. Lake St. Clair 20 miles. St. Clair River 28 miles. Lake Huron to St. Mary's River 260 miles. St. Mary's River 45 miles. Lake Superior to Fort William, 380 miles, making a total distance of 1,395 miles.

There is a third route, but it yet remains to be opened—that by way of the Ottawa, Matawan, and French Rivers;—it would also be a continuous line of navigation, and its distances would

be as follows: Montreal to mouth of French River, Georgian Bay, Lake Huron, 430 miles. Mouth of French River to Sault Ste. Maria, foot of Lake Superior 165 miles, thence to Fort William 380 miles, total distance 975 miles; being 220 miles shorter than the Grand Trunk Railway and the Lakes, and 420 miles less than the routes by the St. Lawrence and Lakes. The time by the first route would be by railway, including necessary stoppages. Montreal to Sarnia 48 hours, thence to Fort William, 70 hours by this route. Total 118 hours or 4 days 22 hours, by the second route, including canal navigation, the time would be 174 hours, or 7 days 6 hours. By way of the Ottawa 97 hours, or 4 days 1 hour.

In this comparison no extraordinary advantage is assumed for the Ottawa route, yet it is shorter as regards time, by three days five hours, than the navigation by the lakes and St. Lawrence, and by 21 hours than the combined railway and navigation. The disadvantages of the first route to an immigrant transportation are sufficiently obvious. Summer is the period at which such a traffic would be most crowded, and for sanitary reasons it would not be desirable to coop up in a railway car, for a journey of two days and two nights, people unused to the fierce heat of a Canadian summer, and in that state of physical prostration which is induced by the hardships of a long voyage, and render immigrants peculiarly liable to disease. The cost would militate against this line as a means of transit; the fare alone would be cheap at \$10 a head, without provisions or means of cooking same, while the cost of the voyage to Fort William would be cheaply paid by \$15 more, making a total of \$25. By way of the St. Lawrence and Lakes, it might be achieved for a like sum; while by way of the Ottawa, \$15 would be amply sufficient, and it could be reduced to \$5 per head. This navigation designed to accommodate vessels of 1,000 tons burthen, could easily carry 500 passengers, the deck area of such a craft being 7,000 square feet, and with an upper deck and saloon, ample space would be afforded for a large number. If once a business of this description was started, vessels would be built to suit the peculiar traffic—half passengers, half freight. On the other route no such reduction of fares need be looked for; the small dimensions of the Welland Canal and its great length, will preclude the possibility of employing vessels of great breadth of beam on it; and the railways which control the other line would be always limited as to number of passengers.

There is what may be safely called an intermediate line between the Ottawa to the northward and the Grand Trunk

and Lakes to the south, which demands attention, especially as it is assumed that if a good waggon road was opened from Fort William through the various portages to Fort Garry, the traffic of the North-west Territory would centre at Toronto. The distances on this route would be Montreal to Toronto, 334 miles; thence to Collingwood, 96 miles; thence to Fort William, 650 miles; total 1,080 miles. The cost of transit would be by railway, \$8; by Lake, \$15; total \$23. Time railway 430 miles, 40 hours; lake 650 miles, 65 hours; total 105 hours, or 4 days 9 hours. The same objection applies as to the other routes, where a large proportion of the distance is accomplished by railway. The shortest and cheapest route between Montreal and Fort William would be 975 miles, if the Atlantic and Pacific Railway, through British Territory, ever becomes *un fait accompli*. The distance will then be reduced to 680 miles, and the whole distance from Halifax to Fort Waddington on Bute Inlet, on the Pacific Coast, 4,206 miles. From Fort William to Fort Garry it is proposed to direct the travel by way of Dog Lake, on a gravel road, a distance of 28 miles; by canoe, boat, or bateaux, up that lake and river, 35 miles, thence over the height of land dividing that lake from Savanna River, falling into Lac des Milles Lacs, 10 miles, by gravel or other road, by canoe on Savanna River and Lac des Milles Lacs 42 milles. Baril Portage one fifth of a mile, by canoe on Baril Lake $8\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Bruce portage, one fourth of a mile, Windegoostegoon Lake, by canoe, 12 miles. French portage, 2 miles, Kagasankok Lake by canoe, 15 miles Deux Riviere portage 2 miles. Sturgeon Lake, by canoe, 27 miles. Island Portage one fifth mile. Nequaquan Lake by canoe 17 miles. Portage 2 miles. Nameuskan Lake by canoe 10 miles. Bare Portage one eighth of a mile. Rainy Lake 46 miles. Fort Frances portage one eighth of a mile. Rainy River and Lake of the Woods by canoe 120 miles. Fort Garry by land road 90 miles. 132 miles of roads, $332\frac{1}{2}$ navigation, of which about 270 miles could be rendered navigable for steamboats at a small outlay. There are *eleven* portages or interruptions to the navigation varying from one eighth to ninety miles in length. The total distance to Fort Garry by road and navigation would be $464\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

Fort Garry is situated on the Red River 40 miles above its junction with Lake Winnepeg; the surplus waters of the chain of lakes through which the route described passes, flows into the Lake of the Woods, and thence by the Winnepeg River into the lake of that name. The latter river is obstructed by rapids, but must eventually be rendered available for navigable

purposes. Red River is navigable from Pembina to Lake Winnepeg for vessels of light draft. The distance by river would be probably 140 miles; the distance to Fort Garry from Fort William by the Lakes Winnepeg and Red River, would be 647 miles by way of the Grand Trunk Railway to Detroit, a distance of 561 miles from Montreal. Detroit to Chicago 280 miles, Chicago to Fort Garry 790; total, 1,631 miles by railway and land roads. By the proposed Atlantic and Pacific Railway, the distance from Montreal to Fort Garry would be 1,270 miles.

The routes by which the Red River territory are approached, appear to be sufficiently difficult for all profitable purposes. The cost of freight from Montreal would be on the cheapest of those in existence over \$60 per ton, a rate which would make commerce with the outer world practically impossible by rendering the usual articles of trade unattainable except at a price utterly beyond their value.

2. The area of the basin drained by Lake Winnepeg is 400,000 square miles of rich agricultural land, and 100,000 unfit for agricultural purposes, but rich in mineral wealth. Iron, coal, salt and gold, it has everything requisite to constitute a rich manufacturing country, with the exception of population to develop its resources, and means of access to render them available. In the limits of a paper of this description it is not necessary to enter into the question of climate, but it is certain that it will compare favorably with Canada, and its capacity, as a grain producing country is beyond question. The area susceptible of cultivation is stated to be 256,000,000 acres.

3. It is evident that any measures devised for effectually opening the communication with the Red River territory must be of an expensive character, and for ordinary freight purposes must consist of a system of railways and improved river navigation. A railway from Fort William to Rainy Lake would be, say 63 miles, at a cost of \$40,000 per mile, \$2,520,000; a like sum would render the navigation perfect to Fort Garry, 584 miles, and opening up 230 miles in length of Lake Winnipeg with its 930 miles of coast line. As the great coal field covers both branches of the Saskatchewan, it will be necessary to render those navigable, especially the North branch, for a distance of 952 miles; the probable cost would not exceed \$5,000,000. The south branch would be navigable to some distance above the *Elbow*, the length over 300 miles, and is not obstructed; the whole cost would be \$7,620,000, and this would give the country a chance of being settled, and opened at the same time.

4. A consideration of the fourth clause is more difficult, because

the formidable Rocky Mountains have to be passed. The distance from the end of navigation on the north branch of the Saskatchewan, at the junction of Brazeau River,—as stated in an admirable pamphlet, intituled, *British Columbia*, by Arthur Harvey, Esq., F.S.S., of the Finance Department,—to Port Waddington, on Bute Inlet, would be 761 miles, of which 309 would be navigation, and 452 railway, in three divisions of 140, 90 and 222 miles each, which would cost at the same rate of \$40,000 per mile, \$18,080,000, the navigable reaches of which there are two, need no outlay, the total cost would be \$25,700,000. Mr. Harvey computes the distance from Fort Garry to Port Waddington at 2,015 miles, and British Columbia as being 280,000 square miles in area. Between the water shed of the Red River and Lake Superior, there is fully 100,000 square miles, so that between that Lake and Pacific, 800,000 square miles would be open to commerce and agriculture by the outlay above stated. It is not intended to take into account the vast area between this territory and the Arctic Circle, nor the resources which may yet be developed therefrom by opening the North-West to settlement. British America covers an area of 3,016,814 square miles, as follows:—

	Square miles.
North-West territory, including Vancouver's Island,	2,480,000
Quebec.....	291,989
Ontario.....	147,332
New Brunswick.....	27,100
Nova Scotia, including Cape Breton.....	18,746
Prince Edward's Island.....	2,134
Newfoundland	35,913
Labrador.....	5,000
Vancouver's Island.....	8,000
	<hr/>
	3,016,814

The distance from Montreal to Fort Garry by way of the St. Lawrence and Lakes, 1,859; by Grand Trunk Railway and Lakes, 1,659; by way of Toronto and Lakes, 1,544 miles; by the Ottawa and Lakes, 1,339; by way of Chicago, 1,631 miles, the latter being by far the most costly.

5. The opening of a territory of the extent described, must stimulate the commercial and agricultural interests of Canada to an extent hardly possible to conceive, and totally impossible to calculate. It will encourage immigration, compel the investment of capital, and necessitate the establishment of manufactories. A large, energetic and industrious population in the Province of

Quebec, naturally adapted to the nicer mechanical arts, are compelled to send a proportion of their surplus labor to the United States, because no means of absorbing it is in existence in Canada. The general complaint that the condition of the people is becoming gradually worse, appears to be well founded ; and in order to find steady and increasing employment for that portion of the surplus labor best fitted for mechanical art, the establishment of manufacturing industries in the Province of Quebec is a necessity of the times. Now the first step towards opening the North-West territory will effect that desirable object. The shortest route from Montreal to Fort Garry is by way of the Ottawa and French River to Lake Huron ; but that route requires to be improved at a cost of \$25,000,000. The proposed design is to make it a navigation admitting vessels of 1,000 tons burthen. At the mouth of French River, on Lake Huron, the ship would be within 545 miles of Fort William, on Lake Superior, and 500 miles of Chicago, on Lake Michigan. Fort William is 464 miles from Fort Garry, the centre commercially of the Red River territory, or rather of the basin of the Winnipeg. Chicago is 341 miles from St. Louis, on the Mississippi, the commercial centre of the South-western and South-eastern cotton States, as Chicago is of the North-west States. It will thus be seen that the mouth of French River is nearly equi-distant between the great inland emporiums of the North and South, and although the abolition of slavery in the Southern States has deprived the world of the benefits of organized and acclimated labor, there can be no doubt that some means will speedily be taken to find a substitute for it, so that cotton, the staple of those States, and at once the cheapest and most cleanly article of human clothing, will again be cultivated even to a greater extent than before the late disastrous contest.

With the great resources of the Province of Quebec in Water power, with the necessary supply of human labor, there can be no reason to doubt but before the works necessary to open the navigation described could be completed, manufactories of cotton cloth would be established there. It is hardly necessary to go into details as to the stimulus given to all kinds of industry ; the extra number of hands engaged as seamen and mechanics, or the other advantages sure to follow in this category, they are sufficiently obvious ; and it is equally certain that cotton could be manufactured at Quebec more cheaply than at Manchester, and there can be no doubt but a very large exodus of capital and enterprise from Great Britain would be the direct consequence of undertaking those great works, especially as it would be only a

removal from the Duchy of Lancaster to the Province of Quebec, both in the Empire of Great Britain.

The question of the value of the North-West to Canada cannot be over-rated ; to the Province of Ontario it would bring the advantage of filling up the unoccupied territory south of Lake Nippissigan and north of Lake Huron to the water-shed of the Hudson's Bay, opening up the rich mineral and wooded country to traffic, and calling into existence industries now undreamt of ; it would stimulate the trade on the Lakes, and constitute the cities on their shores emporiums of commercial and manufacturing activity ; and lastly, it would consolidate, strengthen and render secure from aggression the British Empire. A little consideration on this subject will show how necessary it is that a State wielding such a powerful influence on the destinies of the world should be something more than a mere *congeries* of Provinces, held together by the loosest of all possible national ties. To shew this more clearly, it is only necessary to take into account what really constitutes the British Empire. Great Britain, proper, England, Scotland and Wales, and their adjacent islands, cover an area of 90,038 square miles ; Ireland, 32,512 ; total, 122,550 square miles. European possessions—Heliogoland, Gibraltar, Malta, Gozo, 1,918 square miles ; total European, 124,468 square miles ; African possessions, 133,451 square miles ; Asiatic, 1,356,810 square miles ; America, including West Indies, 3,993,056 square miles ; Australia, 545,000. It will be seen that a grand total of 6,152,785 square miles constitutes the whole British Empire, and that British America actually comprises *two-thirds* of the whole. Deducting the Asiatic possessions, which are only held by right of conquest, the British Empire covers 4,795,975 square miles, peopled by 42,000,000 of British born subjects of Anglo Saxon or Celtic descent ; of these the British Isles proper, hold 28,000,000, and North America, say 4,000,000. Now it is evident that Great Britain has become the great manufacturing and commercial centre ; ~~she is by means of her Colonies~~. It is not pretended in this connection that the labour of 28,000,000 is necessary to provide for the wants of 14,000,000, but it must be borne in mind that the United States has arisen from British Colonies, and that the *Empire of the Seas* was acquired by monopolising their commerce previous to the Rebellion of 1775 ; and of its 30,000,000 of inhabitants, 27,000,000 at least are the descendants of, or were British subjects. As the creation of a rival power on this continent has compelled Great Britain to maintain a costly armament since 1782, it would follow by parity of reasoning, that the withdrawal of all pretensions to sovereignty, either on the con-

tinent or the West Indies, would be followed by a reduction of expenditure and a consequent saving to the people; but this would not be so in fact. The trade of British America with the Mother Country is about £12,000,000 sterling, export and import, the latter greatly preponderating; for this she pays a sum for fleet and army of £1,000,000 sterling, without taking into account correlative advantages, without which a power situated such as she is could not hope to hold her place in the comity of nations. By abandoning or neglecting that portion of her empire in America, she would render her naval ascendancy no longer a matter of importance, raise up and strengthen a rival who would meet her in competition by hostile tariffs, excluding her commerce from North America, and transferring the struggle for supremacy from the Atlantic coasts of the American continent to the shores of India. Her Australian possessions, naturally, left to their own resources, would be obliged either to acknowledge the sovereignty of the United States, or set up for themselves, and the empire reduced to the British Isles, without the power of expansion, would sink to the condition of Holland; for it must be remembered that the productions of those islands do not constitute the wealth, manufacturing or commercial greatness of Britain, but the raw produce of her Colonies, carried back as return freight in the ship which brings out her merchandise, and rendered valuable by her skilled labor. It is therefore the interest of Great Britain to extend the area from which the raw material is drawn, and it is necessary for her political existence to consolidate her empire with that end in view. To fulfil this latter condition it will be necessary to render access to all parts of her territories easy, and thus it becomes quite as much an Imperial work as a Colonial necessity—under the control of the British Government—to open a continuous line of communication from the Atlantic to the Pacific through British North America. Such an undertaking would give ample employment to her surplus population, and reduce the rapidly accumulating evils of pauperism within its natural limits, as these works would absorb 250,000 men annually for the next ten years. At the established rate of increase 10 per cent per annum in 10 years, British America would contain nearly 12,000,000 of a population. The cost of maintaining her supremacy would not be increased to the parent state while the trade with her American Provinces would be trebled. At that period there would not be an unemployed individual in the British isles of the working population. England has now *six* per cent of her whole population paupers, Scotland *five* per cent, and Ireland *one* per cent, and this simply

because the resources of the British Isles are developed to the utmost possible point. These people are thrown as a burden on the country, while here is undeveloped lands of over 2,400,000 square miles, with inexhaustible resources, requiring only the human power and capital uselessly locked up and idle at home. This whole matter is so astoundingly foolish that the political economist seems as if he was studying a romance composed of a series of the most awkward blunders, and it is truly surprising that the simple fact of the duty of government to render access to all parts of its domain practicable to the people has been so long overlooked. Canada is as much a portion of England as Yorkshire, and possesses precisely the same right to Imperial care and culture. The other advantages arising from the ready access to the great grain growing countries of the United States, and that to be developed in the Valley of the Winnipeg, have been argued and illustrated so often that it is not necessary to do more than notice the fact that flour of superior quality could be sold on the wharf at Liverpool for twelve shillings stg. per 100 lbs., as well as abundance of the coarser grain, Indian Corn, &c. The great problem to be solved in stimulating manufacturing industry is that of cheap food, and this can only be effected by enlarging the area of production. In the North-West that is fully equal to the superficies of the Western States that now send out 10,000,000 tons of cereals annually. Here then there is a field sufficiently large for the energies of the surplus and unproductive population of the British Isles, and it is in this direction the profitable investments of the surplus capital of the empire can best be effected. As it is in the power of Great Britain to retain a monopoly of the trade of Canada and the North-West, it is decidedly to her advantage to stimulate its development. Many years must elapse before the United States can attempt to compete with England for the commerce of those colonies and the construction of the Atlantic and Pacific Railway through British territory, which must be effected before that period arrives, will secure a monopoly of the Indian and China trade. If the United States has become a formidable rival of Great Britain, politically and commercially, the latter power has, in those colonies ample means for securing a preponderance through her own natural born subjects, whose traditional feelings and habits leads them to prefer monarchical constitutionalism to democratic misrule. Whatever plan may finally be adopted to effect the projects sketched out in this paper, the Council see no reason to depart from the proposed measure in the Report of the Board of Trade for the year 1868, which may be briefly stated as affirming the proposition "*that Public Works are necessary to promote settlement.*"

The drainage of the Valley of the Winnepeg reaches Hudson's Bay by the Katchewan and Nelson Rivers, at York factory. The distance from Norway House, at the north end of Lake Winnipeg to Port Nelson is 375 miles. Lake Winnipeg is 628 feet above the level of the sea, and as York factory or Port Nelson is the Port of the Hudson's Bay Comyany, and as boats ascend the river to Lake Winnipeg, its navigation cannot be very greatly obstructed except by the position of Port Nelson, which is sometimes closed by ice for 10 months in the year. It is to be regretted that no complete survey has been made of this admirable system of waters, of which Lake Winnipeg is the great concentrating reservoir, and it is necessary to ascertain how far they can be rendered available for the opening of the country and its future trade. Its geographical position places it within a zone of "*great precipitation*," the rain fall is abundant, and every valley has its lakelet. It is also a land of hill and dale, wood and water, rich soil, and mineral productions, only requiring the hand and brain of man to make it a wealthy and populous country. The people of Canada are deeply interested in its development, and with them it rests to inaugurate the preliminary measures to that end.

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